



# TIST: The International Small Group & Tree Planting Program:

Planting one tree makes a difference.

Planting millions restores environments and changes lives.



USAID/Kenya-Lynn Johnson, Ripple Effect Images

## What is TIST and what does it do?

TIST, The International Small Group & Tree Planting Program, is one of the most innovative tree planting programs in the world. Worldwide, TIST farmers plant 6,000 trees a day and have planted more than 10 million trees in the last decade to offset deforestation. More than 50,000 TIST farmers in Kenya have so far planted 7 million trees, verifying their condition and location with award-winning, sophisticated methods on hand-held computers.

## Why do farmers join TIST?

Kenyan farmers join because they are acutely aware of the impact that deforestation and drought have on their lives and livelihood. According to the United Nations, the current rate of deforestation in Kenya costs the nation nearly \$300 million a year in tourism, energy and farming. Tree-cutting also endangers the major rivers that provide water for most of Kenya, originating in the largest “water towers.”

TIST enables farmers to transition from sheer survival to empowerment. Through TIST training and collaboration, members become environmental leaders in their communities. TIST members learn to develop nurseries, plant trees to improve their land, recognize medicinal plants, and use water and wood efficiently.

TIST provides hard-working farmers, both women and men, a stipend for planting trees, plus access to future, long-term income, through the global market for greenhouse gas (GhG) credits. The trees they plant store carbon by capturing and containing it as the tree grows. This stored carbon can be sold in the international carbon market to offset the carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere by environmentally conscious individuals, companies and industrialized nations.

## How does TIST restore the environment?

According to a 2011 US Government report, deforestation is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all global transportation combined. The internationally recommended standard for forest cover is 10 percent of a country's landmass: Kenya today has less than two percent.

Forests are a critical source of food, energy, medicine, income and timber. They hold soil in place and help it absorb rainfall, feeding streams and rivers. Restoring forests means conserving and restoring biodiversity lost to deforestation, habitat destruction, and soil erosion. East Africa contains remarkable levels of biodiversity. As just one example, according to USG research, 40,000 varieties of houseplants form the basis of a US\$100 million global trade; most have been derived from a handful of species found in the Kenyan forests.

### NEWS FLASH:

On June 6, 2011, TIST founder Clean Air Action Corporation signed an agreement with Kenya Forest Service (KFS) allowing TIST members to plant and care for trees inside Kenya's protected areas, particularly Mt. Kenya and the Mau Forest Complex.

*“Kenya and the KFS have a lot of badly degraded forest land. TIST farmers have found ways to organize themselves and this incredible desire to replant the forest, improve water quality, and nurture biodiversity. But not all of them have land,” says Ben Henneke, CEO of Clean Air Action. “So this is a wonderful match.”*

*In addition, TIST recently became the world's first organization to receive dual international certification for its pioneering methods of quantifying trees planted and measuring the carbon stored in the trees—making TIST trees a valuable commodity in the emerging international carbon market.*



***TIST is committed to forest restoration through tree planting and education.***

**How does TIST accomplish sustainable results?** TIST harnesses the power of small groups who choose to unite for a common purpose and a better life. TIST recognizes that the farmers are the local experts. They have a unique knowledge of the changes in their environment and an intense familiarity with the impact of deforestation and drought.

1. TIST trains members intensively in how to grow seedlings and build nurseries, plant and nurture trees, practice conservation farming, and use new, fuel-efficient stoves to reduce deforestation. TIST seminars also include leadership, nutrition and health education including HIV/AIDS prevention, and biodiversity.
2. The Small Groups include both men and women, and rotate leadership.
3. TIST Small Group members choose which types of trees to plant and where, to gain maximum benefit over the long term. They may plant around their homes, on their farms, in their villages, and now, thanks to a new agreement with the National Forest Service, in protected areas to safeguard watersheds. Benefits include fruit, nuts, firewood, increased shade, reduced soil erosion, and increases in farm productivity—as well as long-term profits from carbon trading.
4. Transparency and accountability are key TIST values. TIST has developed an award-winning system to accurately monitor progress and results. Using hand-held computers and GPS devices, highly trained local quantifiers visit each planting and record the location, number, size and species of each tree. TIST quantifiers take photos of group members, their nurseries and trees, uploading this information to the central TIST database using cell phones or Internet technology. Everyone can view satellite images of dramatic forest regrowth in Kenya. ([www.tist.org/tist/kenyagrowth.php](http://www.tist.org/tist/kenyagrowth.php).)
5. TIST members receive regular cash payments to compensate them for planting and nurturing their trees for long-term growth. This early incentive encourages the farmers to care for trees during the critical years while they are small, before they provide other valuable benefits. Eventually, TIST farmers will receive 70% of the profits on the sale of carbon credits on the global carbon markets.

### **Which organizations sustain TIST?**

TIST is the program of a Global Development Alliance linking USAID, Clean Air Action Corporation, which founded TIST, and the Institute for Environmental Innovation, a US-based NGO that provides the farmer training and other capacity-building. USAID is supporting TIST in Kenya with \$7.5 million over five years. Clean Air Action has invested close to \$11 million in developing methods, monitoring technology and pilot projects.

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**Perhaps the best statement of the TIST values was expressed by one Kenyan TIST group:**

***“We are honest, accurate and transparent. We are servants to each other.”***